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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000038

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SUBJECT: QATAR INITIATIVE -- AU-ARAB MINISTERIAL ON DARFUR:  
NEXT STEPS

REF: SHORTLEY/LEBARON E-MAIL OF JANUARY 14

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, reasons 1.4 (b, d)

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(C) KEY POINTS  
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-- The January 14 statement issued by the African and Arab Ministers meeting in Doha to discuss next steps in resolving the Darfur crisis includes a call on the UN Security Council to "postpone the procedures ... (of Sudanese) cases referred to the International Criminal Court" under article (16) of the Rome Statute.

-- The statement further mandates a delegation composed of Qatar, the African Union, and the Arab League to visit New York and lobby Arab and African UNSC members on this provision.

-- UN and AU Sudan Mediator Bassole indicated to Ambassador in a January 14 meeting following the Doha Ministerial session that Sudanese rebel movements will not react favorably to these provisions of the statement. Ambassador agreed, cautioning that the Qatar initiative must not evolve into a regional effort focused on protecting al-Bashir from the ICC.

-- Bassole told the Ambassador that during the meetings he strongly encouraged "all countries" to support Qatar's Initiative on Darfur, with the specific aim of bringing the Sudanese parties to Doha. His second main point to the Ministerial Committee, he said, was a caution to the Committee not to neglect the interests of Sudan's neighbors, a thinly veiled reference to Egypt.

-- Bassole believed that neighbors Egypt and Libya were not helping the Qatar Initiative.

-- Ambassador encouraged Bassole, at the urging of U.S. Special Envoy Richard Williamson, to stop in Cairo after Doha and told Bassole that Williamson had made recent calls to Libyan and Egyptian officials to encourage their support. Bassole said his immediate travel plans to Tanzania and Morocco made an immediate Cairo stop impossible, but he promised to visit Cairo as soon as practical.

-- Bassole said rebel leader Abdul Wahid remains "reluctant" to participate in Qatar's Initiative, which means a way must be found for both SLM Unity and JEM to participate. Ambassador described to Bassole the seven ways in which the U.S. is prepared to support Bassole's efforts.

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(C) COMMENT  
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-- The dueling approaches by Egypt and Qatar to the Gaza fighting already cast a shadow over Qatar's Darfur initiative. For example, the Egyptians were represented at the Doha Ministerial not by a minister but by the head of their Sudan office at the Egyptian MFA.

-- Egypt is well positioned to undermine Qatar's effort to mediate in Darfur. As the tension between the two countries grows over Gaza, Egypt could increasingly have the incentive to do so.

End Key Points and Comment.

¶1. (U) The Ministerial Statement issued by the African and Arab Committee following its January 14 discussions in Doha on Darfur contain two noteworthy provisions pertaining to International Criminal Court (ICC) proceedings against President Bashir and other Sudanese officials:

-- "Calling the Security Council anew to enforce article (16) of the Rome Statute in order to postpone the procedures pertaining to all cases referred to the International Criminal Court with a view to allowing more enhancement of the prospects of peace and justice and availing best conditions to launch peace talks and achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Darfur crisis as soon as possible."

-- "Mandating a delegation from Qatar, the African Union, and the Arab League to visit New York to coordinate with the Arab and African members of the UN Security Council with a view to mobilizing international and regional necessary support to uphold the objectives of the aforementioned

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committee and enhance peace prospects."

¶2. (C) In a conversation with Ambassador shortly after the statement was released, UN and AU Sudan Mediator Djibril Bassole expressed his concern that the reaction from Sudanese rebel groups to the above provisions of the final statement "will not be positive." Ambassador agreed, cautioning that the Qatar initiative must not evolve into a regional effort focused on protecting al-Bashir from the ICC.

¶3. (C) Bassole's deputy, former Tunisian Ambassador to the U.S. Azouz Ennifar (who also attended the meeting along with P/E Chief Rice and Kemi Yai of AF/SPG), expressed his surprise that the final written statement endorsed a postponement of proceedings so forcefully. It was Ennifar's view that the ministers in their discussions were less enthusiastic about postponement.

¶4. (C) Ennifar opined that Qatar clearly must have been favorable to the inclusion of these points. If not, as host, Qatar would have kept them out of the final statement. That said, Ennifar observed earlier in the day, with Bassole not present, that there is a "close relationship between Bassole and Qatar and that Qatar appears to be following Bassole's lead."

BASSOLE'S PRESENTATION

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¶5. (C) Bassole told Ambassador that he emphasized two main points in his presentation to the assembled ministers. First, it is important that "all countries support Qatar's Initiative on Darfur" and the idea of having talks among the parties concerned in Doha, regardless of events elsewhere (read Gaza).

¶6. (C) Bassole said that the crisis in Gaza should not distract the members of the joint AU-Arab League committee from working together on Darfur. (Note: relations between Egypt and Qatar, two members of the committee, have taken a deeply negative turn over events in Gaza and how to deal with them.) Bassole noted that Egypt did not send its Foreign

Minister for the meetings in Doha. The office director for Sudan policy, instead, represented Cairo.

¶17. (C) The second key point Bassole made to the ministers was that it is essential "not to neglect the interests of the neighbors" of Sudan in moving forward toward an agreement on Darfur. Libya and Egypt in particular were causing trouble for Qatar. Ambassador responded that U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan Richard Williamson had spoken with the Libyans and the Egyptian Foreign Minister recently in an effort to help.

#### NEXT STEPS

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¶18. (C) Ambassador encouraged Bassole, at the urging of Williamson, to make a stop in Cairo after the meetings in Doha. Bassole said he would work in a stop in Cairo as soon as practical, but he could not travel directly to Egypt from Doha, since he was committed to meetings in Tanzania January 16 and then had to travel to Rabat for CENSAD meetings.

¶19. (C) Looking ahead to next steps, Bassole told the Ambassador that Abdul Wahid remains "reluctant" to participate in Qatar's Initiative, so Bassole recommended ensuring that the other two main rebel movements (SLM Unity and JEM) participate. Bassole said in his view it is "best to start with JEM now. The problem is to bring SLM Unity on board."

¶10. (C) Ambassador discussed with Bassole a list (ref) of areas (as coordinated by Special Envoy Williamson and AF) in which the U.S. is willing to help bring the major rebel units on board with Qatar's Initiative. Bassole said he would review the points as he formulates next steps and looks forward to working with Washington. Ambassador underscored Washington's strong support for Bassole and his mediation efforts.  
LeBaron